The Art of Building In Some Recent Aspects

Monumental and Other Designs at the League's Exhibition —The Exotic Motive in Contemporary Taste—Scenic Ideals

By Royal Cortissoz

The principal event of the season impends in the sale of the collection left by the late George A. Hearn, which will be placed on view at the American Art Galleries on February 19. It will take five sessions to dispose of the pictures, and seven more to sell the miscellaneous objects. The latter include a number of antique ivories forming a collection by themselves, and a rich array of porcelains, as well as bronzes and other things. Mr. Hearn's notable gifts to the Metropolitan Museum and to other public institutions long ago made familiar his traits as a collector. Ordinarily, too, they would have suggested that such generosity as his had left his own gallery but ill supplied. As a matter of fact, he was so ardent a buyer, through such a long period, that when all his gifts were made he still possessed an extraordinarily large body of paintings, old masters and modern works. To the American school, as his contributions to the Metropolitan, including the Hearn Fund, conspicuously show, he was unremittingly faithful, and the forthcoming sale will disperse a really remarkable collection of native art. There will be an edition de luxe of the illustrated catalogue, which has been compiled by a group of well known writers, Messrs. W. Roberts, W. A. Coffin, M. W. Brockwell and H. Townsend.

American Architecture

In spite of their tendency to discourage him, the exhibitions of the Architectural League will always set the connoisseur of the art of building upon new explorations of that art as it is practised in America. The subject may be kept well in the background of the current show at the Fine Arts Building, but it is not, after all, entirely unrepresented. One may see, if he is willing to take the trouble, something of what our architects have been doing. In mere volume, of course, their work has of late been seriously reduced. It is common gossip in the profession that many of its members have had to dismiss numbers of their draftsmen since the war with Germany was declared. Most commissions undertaken prior to that event have been carried to completion, but new work is rare. Clients have other things to think about. Steel has gone up in price and is difficult to obtain in any case. All the materials of building are higher in cost. It seems probable, too, that the situation will grow worse before it grows better. Hard circumstance is giving the architects a breathing space, which is perhaps not a bad stage of affairs at which to inquire into the present condition of their art. We have an ineradicable predilection for considering them as artists. The league may fill its galleries with the atmosphere of a manufacturers' bazaar, doubled with that of a Greenwich Village ball, but lovers of architecture are bound to go on looking for evidences of the only thing that counts in any of the arts—creative personality.

At the same time it is important for criticism to take account of certain elements which affect the development of architecture as they affect neither painting nor sculpture. We must remember that originality in building is dependent far more than in either of the sister arts upon predetermined factors of style. The architect may choose from among several idioms, but having made his choice he is compelled, by the very nature of things, to play the game. Where the painter, for example, may range far and wide, the test of the architect's inventive powers is infinitely narrower and more severe. Utility and the æsthetic decencies conspire together to keep him fairly close to tradition. Personality, in his case, must be very strong, very interesting, if it is to come to the surface. We are unjust if we ask too much of it.

Take, for example, the matter of the public building. He would be an altogether too exacting person who looked for notable originality in this field of endeavor. The indispensable qualities here are simplicity, dignity, good taste. And these, as it happens, are precisely what one finds in the typical public building at the league exhibition. There are several instances to be cited. George B. Post & Sons send illustrations of their great Capitol for Wisconsin, begun some years ago, but only recently completed. Tracy & Swartwout are represented by their Missouri State Capitol. McKim, Mead & White have more than one monumental exhibit—the McKinley Memorial at Niles, the Art Gallery at Youngstown, the Hall of Classical Sculpture at the Metropolitan Museum. Mr. B. W. Morris includes among his numerous contributions the new Courthouse at White Plains. There is a souvenir of Mr. Bosworth's huge building for the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the shape of a view of its portico. The impulse to group all these designs rather than to consider them separately springs from no desire for mere convenience. It is due, rather, to the absence of clearly marked traits from the

A WAYSIDE POOL

From the painting by A. H. Wyant at the Levy Gallery.

partures from it. Messrs. Day & Klauber have, of course, adhered to the old English style in their handsome buildings for Princeton University. The brick architecture of the Colonial period is emulated by Messrs. Murphy & Dana in their delightful scheme for the Loomis Institute. The Italian Renaissance is represented in another building to be cited at this point — Messrs York & Sawyer's structure for the Brooklyn Trust Company, and that, by the way, registers a high light in the show. Again we must remark that it is not a great building. Momentarily, even, we are a little dubious about the balance struck between the rusticated stages of the façade and the simpler surfaces above them. It is not the most convincing balance in the world. Yet the building, in the main, stays graciously in the mind. It is not dull. That is, we are afraid, the epithet extorted by such bury, marks a stride ahead of the cottage work by which his name has chiefly been made familiar. This brick structure of his is charmingly designed. The house has a physiognomy, a friendly, welcoming air. Its Georgian Colonial style is handled as though the architect had made it his own.

The great problem, of course, for the user of the historic styles is the problem of conquering them or leaving them to proclaim only their origin. There are times when the strict Italianism of an American dwelling involves no reproach. There is, for example, Mr. Eugene Lang's "Italian Villa of Paolini Gerli," as the catalogue aptly has it. Erected at Bronxville, a location which somehow seems to spell incongruity, we are nevertheless taken captive by the intensely Southern charm of the thing. Yet there are other, more important, schemes in the

THE CONVERSE MEMORIAL LIBRARY AT AMHERST, MASS.

McKim, Mead & White, architects. From a photograph at the Architectural League Exhibition.

mass. One of these compositions, the great sculpture hall at the museum, detaches itself from the rest as possessing a special distinction. It is McKim, Mead & White at their best, in the noble vein of the Pennsylvania Station. On the other hand, looking at these buildings as a group, one is impressed by their pedestrian excellence. They are not great buildings, but they are good buildings. One discerns in them no creative magic, no development of the ancient classical idiom into beautiful forms. But they are sound; they represent academic art in a wholesome if not brilliant estate. They provoke one consoling reflection if no other, and that is, "How much more edifying the American public building is to-day than it was twenty-five years ago!" That, by itself, is something.

The classical motive cleverly predominates, but here and there are de-

THE DEPEW MEMORIAL FOUNTAIN AT INDIANAPOLIS

A. Sterling Calder, sculptor; Henry Bacon, architect. From a photograph at the Architectural League Exhibition.

specimens of ecclesiastical architecture as stray into the exhibition. There is one attractive piece in the imposing reredos dseigned by Mr. Goodhue for St. Thomas's Church, and sculptured by Mr. Lee Lawrie, but the church work as a whole is in no wise beguiling. The most interesting exterior, Messrs Cram & Ferguson's Wheaton College Chapel, is an indubitably accurate version of an old New England type, but it is a terribly cold, muscle-bound affair.

Urban architecture in its domestic aspect receives one triumphant illustration at the hands of Mr. John Russell Pope in his drawings for "A City Residence," as yet unbuilt. The drawings themselves, appearing in the usual welter of photographs, make by their singularity a winning appeal; and as the design is studied it discloses a very fine quality. The style is drawn from eighteenth century France, but this mansion, lifted on a terrace stretching the length of a city block, justifies its isolation through its fine proportions, its severe elegance, its fusion of grace with dignity—all expressed with an indefinably personal touch. Here is true architecture, a house with character, and, in spite of its great scale, with charm. This latter trait is to be signalized in certain contributions of Messrs Cross & Cross, designers of the Links Club—upon which the savor of things Georgian has been set as in a patina—and of the beautiful wrought iron grilles transforming a couple of small houses in East Sixty-second Street. McKim, Mead & White's house for Mr. Newbold must also be mentioned here for its pure Renaissance quality. But the city dwellings as a rule are not in the least thrilling. We turn for refreshment, as we seem to have turned in many another year, to the country houses. These, as usual, too, are the more successful as they are the less ambitious. At their head we would place the house for Mr. Morawetz at Syosset, by Delano & Aldrich, a study in simplicity in which reliance is especially placed upon linear factors and questions of spacing. This, again, like Mr. Pope's big city house, has character, it is a work of pondered design, and yet in its simple style it is almost casual. The casual motive, by which we mean the natural, spontaneous effect, is well exploited by Mr. Lewis Colt Albro in two or three capital farm buildings, and it is used to good purpose by Messrs Davis, McGrath & Kiessling in their alterations at Glen Cove, by Messrs. Walker & Gillette in a house at the same place and by Mr. T. H. Lyon in several English cottages, though these last contributions are a trifle heavy-handed. Mr. Aymar Embury, in his house at Waterexhibition which incline us to question the permanent validity of the exotic motive. When Mr. Morris Italianizes this feature or that of his elaborate design for Mr. J. C. Baldwin at Mount Kisco, or makes the great music room on the same estate look like a page out of Nash's "Mansions," we cannot but recognize the broad effectiveness of his gesture. At the same time this and other episodes in the exhibition wake the suspicion that the line between an architectural and a scenic ideal is very easily crossed so easily that the designer may be himself unconscious of the transition. Perhaps the most vivid instance is supplied by Mr. Paul Chalfin. He shows photographs of his work at Hero Land and for the festa in Macdougal Alley and with them some illustrations of the Florida estate he has devised for Mr. James Deering. All three contributions are significant of the same taste. It is decorative, plastic, operatic, what you will, but architecturally speaking it leaves us cold. There are unusually generous examples of landscape architecture in the exhibition, schemes by James L. Greenleaf, Eyre, Wilson and McIlvaine, Ferruccio Vitale, Mary Rutherford Jay, Charles Wellford Leavitt and others. They show the increasing attention that is being given to this art, and the increasing proficiency in it of a surprisingly large body of practitioners. But not all of the members of the new school are keeping to the safe ground of, say, Mr. Leavitt's beautiful wild-flower garden at Red Bank. There are signs that the theatre, as it were, is creeping in, that the scenic idea to which we have referred is coming more and more into vogue. It has its merits, in the right hands. There are masterpieces in Italy —the Villa Lante, at Bagnaia, for example—which might have been laid out for drop scenes in a theatre. But in our American environment the motive is dangerous, to say the least.

If architecture has outstripped all the other arts in the United States, it is for reasons very easily stated. It has enlisted the energies of some men of genius and more men of great talent. It has been peculiarly supported by a vast national prosperity. No modern European school of architecture has had the demand for new buildings that we have enjoyed. But it is even more important to reckon with certain less ponderable influences. Architecture has been subjected with us to a sterner discipline than has been enforced upon either painting or sculpture. Its leaders have made more of training, of exact knowledge, and, above all, they have given closer attention to the transcendent matter of taste. Why did McKim move heaven and earth to get the American Academy at Rome established? It was not to make American architects into little devotees of the Italian Renaissance. It was to enrich their minds, to steady their judgment, to fertilize their taste, to give them a keener sense of the rectitude of art. Our architecture has improved by leaps and bounds because so many of the men who make it have as their dearest possession a profound respect for their mystery, a sincere idealism. They have believed, as we were saying at the outset, that they were artists, not tradesmen. Well, of late, divers things have developed to threaten their high resolution. They have to reckon, for example, with the man who was born amid the horrors of horsehair furniture, and perhaps for that very reason is keen upon dying only in the odor of a kind of Medicean sanctity.

The epoch of decorative antiquities, of what the irreverent call "junk," brought in possibilities too rich, as some architects have employed them, to be despised. But it also introduced something like a menace. Architecture has been swamped in decoration, in picturesqueness, in sheer exotic luxury. Taste, to which simplicity is as the breath of life, has been smothered in a mass of antique stuffs, furniture, sarcophagi and goodness knows what impedimenta. And now this factitious sentiment is creeping into construction. A great country place is made to look less like a home than like a place of flamboyant entertainment. One thinks of Marie Antoinette and her friends at court, flinging themselves into an imitation of farm life. It was very pretty, of course. But it wasn't farm life. This new style of architecture that we have in mind is likewise very pretty. But there is nothing at all American about it; nor is there anything convincingly architectural. It is scenic, not constructive.

Which brings us once more to that queer pageantry in the league's exhibition which was discussed in this place a week ago. It makes, as we said then, a good peep show, and this cannot completely obscure the things exhibited that are worth while. We have ferreted out, as the foregoing observations have shown, a certain number of purely architectural compositions. It is tolerably easy, also, to get at the sculpture, at the works by Messrs. Calder, French and Bartlett, by Miss Longman, Miss Scudder, Miss Shonnard and Miss Frishmuth, which make, as it happens, one of the most engaging features of the occasion. The moment one hunts up the details, in fact, it is obvious that the league has brought together a quantity of admirable material. Mr. Gardner Hale's enchanting fresco in the old Italian manner, the decorations by Mr. Crisp, the Batik tapestries by Mr. Hartman, the curious masks by Mr. Benda these and a hundred other pieces unquestionably repay scrutiny. And the manufactures yield as full a harvest, from the silks of the Cheneys to the superb marble mantel exhibited by Batterson and Eisele. But what does it profit these productions that they are flung into a kaleidoscopic ensemble, tricked out with the properties of the playhouse, until every nuance of color, every refinement of form, every individual quality of design, is lost as in a raucous riot? What chance has taste in such a hullabaloo? The very principle which the Architectural League should seek most earnestly to inculcate is here most signally violated. It is not merely a question of how the thing has been done; it is the question, rather, of its having been done at all. If the architect is a showman for the trades then it is all very well, there is no more to be said. But if he is an artist, pure and simple, as McKim was, then let him stick to his art.

A foreword to the catalogue leads off with an unimpeachable sentiment, as follows: "The Architectural League Exhibition is held annually for the dual purpose of offering to the architects and those in the allied arts the opportunity of presenting their recent work to the public and of giving the public the opportunity of keeping in touch with the progress of those arts." So much for art. Then comes practicality: "The entire cost of presenting the exhibition is defrayed from the income derived from the advertisements in the catalogue, space taken in the supper room and galleries by the exhibition of materials and craftsmanship, the fee for admission and the sale of the catalogues, and any deficiency is made up from the funds of the league. This exhibition is in no way a source of income to the league." That, too, as a "business proposition," is equally unimpeachable. And yet we say, "The pity of it!" Why should the league have to concern itself with advertisements or "space taken in the supper room" or any other such matters? Why not revert to architecture in the old-fashioned sense, the art of building pure and simple, the art of the artist, passionately expressing himself in the most personal terms of his craft? Would the public then refuse to come to his exhibition? Perhaps. Then in that case, if the architect has so completely lost his hold as an artist upon the public, he would have a very simple remedy—he could put up the shutters.

Notes

Mr. Charles Hopkinson is making an interesting exhibition at the Arden gallery of his portraits and marines, showing twenty-five or thirty oils and almost as large a group of water colors. He commands respect by his sincerity. There is no straining after effect in his work, no emphasis placed upon the "decorative pattern" to which so many of our modern portrait painters are addicted. In his two best paintings, the "Prof. G. H. Palmer" and the "Miss E. C. Putnam," the particular traits he reveals are sympathy in characterization and a kind of suave thoroughness in workmanship. He is uneven, a fact which might have been concealed from us if he had not made his exhibition a little too freely retrospective. There are too many paintings here. Some of them are unworthy of a man of his talent. But he manages to throw the lesser works into the background. When we are looking at the two portraits just cited, or at the spirited sketch of "Mr. James Hendrick," or at the captivating "H. H. and Her Sister," or at the sparkling marines, we think only of his fresh point of view, his pleasant color and his exhilarating facility.

The Levy gallery makes an exhibition of a collection of some thirty-odd paintings recently bought en bloc from Mr. Sanden—paintings by the late A. H. Wyant, D. W. Tryon, J. Francis Murphy and the Canadian artist Horatio Walker. It is an exceptionally brilliant group of landscapes, dominated by one masterpiece, Wyant's "Wayside Pool," but maintaining a pretty high level throughout. The Tryons are of both early and later periods, and embrace some lovely illustrations of his delicate art. There are eight or ten Wyants, every one of them breathing the sweet sylvan spirit of his robust naturalism. The "Wayside Pool" is a glorious picture, the kind of thing that neither Diaz nor Rousseau could have bettered.

At the Ehrich gallery there are paintings by "the lesser known masters," old pictures which make no pretence to "importance," but frequently have sterling, though modest, merit. John Thomson, of Duddington, an obscure landscape man of a hundred years ago; Allan Ramsay, Joseph Highmore, Alessandro Magnasco, Angelica Kaufmann, Guido Reni and other mediocre names are not unpleasantly represented. The most arresting piece on the walls is a vivacious sketch of a Rubens-like motive by Pieter Lastman.

The Eclectics, which is to say Walter Griffin, George Luks, Philip L. Hale and other painters, with Mahonri Young, Solon H. Borglum and other sculptors, are having an exhibition at the Folsom gallery.

The Kraushaar gallery announces a show of new paintings by Mr. Augustus Vincent Tack. Water colors by Mr. Gifford Beal are at the Macbeth gallery. The Reinhardt gallery shows recent portraits by Mr. S. Montgomery Roosevelt. Decorations and paintings by Mr. Maxfield Armfield may be seen at the Arlington gallery.

At the Anderson galleries there will be placed on view next Wednesday a collection of duplicate engravings, etchings, woodcuts and lithographs from the Boston Museum, to be sold on the evenings of February 19 and 20. The catalogue runs to more than four hundred numbers.

HOUSE FOR J. B. BURRALL AT WATERBURY

Designed by Aymar Embury. From a photograph at the Architectural League Exhibition.

The Misadventure of Lieutenant Ward

By Pierre Mille

Translated by William L. McPherson

Here is something unique in the way of war stories. It is a British war story, written by a Frenchman—and written well, for the author is Pierre Mille, one of the giants of contemporary French fiction. Frenchmen are seldom felicitous in handling British topics or characters. British psychology and British forms of expression are a puzzle to them. But to this story M. Mille has imparted a true British color and has added a striking touch of Kiplingesque humor.

THAT evening, when the officers' mess of the second battalion of the Staffordshire Fusileers learned that Captain H. B. Wriggles, of the Intelligence Service, detached for the moment to Paris, had been promoted to the grade of major, the news was received with disgust. The general opinion was that this advancement brought disgrace on the entire officers' corps of the British army. Among the young lieutenants those most moderate in the expression of their opinion said that Wriggles was a cad and "a regular nuisance." The others, with greater frankness, declared that, although Wriggles might be able to win a majority, he would nevertheless remain a "perfect swine"; that is to say, in French, the most accomplished of pigs. Such is the freedom of language in the camps, even among our allies, whose good education and manners are proverbial.

Major Hobson, on whom his rank imposed more reserve, contented himself with avowing that the promotion didn't impress him very favorably. Then the conversation took a more philosophic, though still personal, turn.

"What in the world could the brute have done to make him seem deserving of such recognition?"

Such was the question raised—and raised very naturally.

Then a little subaltern ventured to suggest:

"Ward could tell us. It is Ward who was the cause of it."

All eyes turned on the poor Ward, with a look of disapproval, if not of incredulity. The lieutenant was of too good family and had been too well brought up to think for an instant of committing the unpardonable baseness of lying to his fellow officers. But there was no offence in keeping silent. He tried to hold his peace, staring fixedly at his plate. Thereupon Major Hobson said simply, in the tone of one gentleman addressing another gentleman:

"Mr. Ward?"

And Lieutenant Ward knew that there was nothing left for him to do but to speak.

"It is true," he said, "that I had something to do with this affair. But I should like to know what any one of you would have done in my place. The thing would have happened, just the same, to anybody else. I was there. That was all. I merely had the bad luck to be there.

"I had gone to Paris to spend my last leave. You understand that I should have preferred to go to England. But you know the difficulties which they make nowadays about letting you take passage on any boat. That explains why, the first evening I was in Paris, I bought a ticket to 'Funicula.'"

"Of course," cried the assemblage, with one voice. "Cut out the explanations. When one goes to Paris he goes to 'Funicula.' But after that?"

"After that I met an officer of my rank by the name of Herbert Collins, of the 3d Lincolnshires. A very good looking fellow, very smart, whom I had never seen before and whom I didn't know from Adam or Eve, as the French say. There are a hundred thousand Englishmen named Collins. But this one was very smart, as I was telling you; very high class, evidently; he had been at Rugby and then at Cambridge, as I could tell at once from his slang. I was at Eton and then at Oxford, where the slang is not the same. It was he who made that remark, and it was only after I had told him my schools that he used those characteristic slang phrases. I remembered it afterward.

"The 3d Lincolnshires are in Flanders, not in Picardy. But he knew the names of some of us—those who belong to the best families. Afterward we talked of one thing and another, of girls, and a little shop. Army gossip—that came naturally into the conversation, especially personal gossip. So and so is there; so and so has been transferred. You can see how it was."

"I see," said Major Hobson, still very severely.

"And then we took a cocktail at the bar. And then"——

"And then he met Wriggles," sang out the whole table. "He never casts loose from the bar—Wriggles doesn't. You poor innocent!"

"The fact is I didn't know about that," Ward admitted.

"And Wriggles had his skin full of whiskey at 6 o'clock," the table continued. "But he kept at it because he never can get enough. And Wriggles was disagreeable."

"He was disagreeable," Ward acknowledged. "But first of all he was rambunctiously, dead drunk polite. He treated us to cocktails. Then we felt obliged to treat him. And, finally, having done what politeness seemed to require, we tried to break away, because his conversation is not at all pleasant; and I hate to compromise myself by associating with people who are not gentlemen, particularly when they wear the uniform."

"And then," interrupted some one, imitating Wriggles's hiccough, "he said 'Hic! Hic! Hic! I'll teach you Hic!—to be respectful—Hic!—to your superiors.'"

"He did say that," Ward again admitted, "and in a scandalous manner. He was most ungentlemanlike. I tried again to get away from him and he got perfectly furious."

"And your companion—Collins or whatever you call him"—asked the major, "what did he do all this time?"

"He did nothing and said nothing. He looked disgusted. He certainly was disgusted."

"I see," said the major again.

"Then Wriggles asked us to show him our furlough papers," Ward continued. "We showed them, and they were in perfect order, with the dates, the seals, the signatures and everything else. But he said:

"'These are not right. And you must go with me to the English headquarters in Paris.'

"I protested that my papers were perfectly correct, and that if they weren't they ought to be. But he answered: 'You—you are an ass. A little imbecile of an ass. (That fellow Wriggles is about as choice in his language as a stoker in the merchant marine.) And if your comrade is not an ass he will come also—especially because he is not an ass.'

"We started toward the door, and on the way this stranger, whom he had called my comrade—Collins, if you prefer—whispered in my ear: 'He is drunk. Let us get rid of him.'

"But I looked at him with astonishment, because one ought never to disobey the order of a superior officer, even if he is a drunkard. But I called a taxicab—for the honor of the uniform. And in that way we got to English headquarters."

"And what hapened there?" the major asked, curiously.

"There the officer in charge declared that my papers were perfectly regular. Then he examined Collins's. The signatures and the seals were all right. But he looked at the paper against the light and asked:

"'You are Lieutenant Collins, are you? Can you explain to me how it happens that Lieutenant Collins, of the 3d Lincolnshires, is on leave? He ought to be at the front at this minute. Can you also explain how the paper on which your permission is written happened to be manufactured in Germany? It is not there that the English army is in the habit of ordering its supplies. My congratulations, nevertheless. The signatures and seals are perfectly imitated.'

"The stranger grew deadly pale. They seized him. I suppose that he has been shot by now. They only said to me, 'You can go. This will teach you to study carefully the people you meet. You will testify before the council of war, if there is one.'

"I went away with Wriggles. At the door of the office he tapped me on the shoulder and cried:

"'I drink. By God, I don't try to conceal the fact that I drink. I need my allowance, you understand—my allowance. But when I have my allowance I am a genius. I read through pockets. Hic! And into souls.'"

This story modified in a certain degree the sentiment of the mess with regard to Wriggles.

"It is beyond question," the subaltern suggested, "that he will never be a gentleman. But, after all, he is a very funny fellow."